

# Control Is Best Answer To Pesky Flea Problems

By K. H. SUTHERLAND, M.D., County Health Officer

In recent days the health department has begun receiving calls from persons who are being plagued with what some call "sand fleas" in their homes and yards. The term, sand fleas, for this common Southern California problem is as misnomer, as the usual source of this insect is cats and dogs. However, these fleas will readily bite people also.

One may well be suspicious that fleas are the source of itching bites when these bites occur about the feet and ankles, for the insect is most frequently found on the ground or floor. Infants and young children who play on the floor may be bitten any-

where on the body. ALL FLEAS require the blood of animals or birds in order to live. The life cycle of the flea passes through four stages of development—egg, larva, pupa, and adult. Eggs may be laid on the host animal, then subsequently drop to the floor where they hatch into larvae. Larvae spin tiny cocoons in which they change first into pupae and then into adults.

Upon emerging from the cocoon, the adult flea is ready to feed on some warm blooded animal. The life cycle takes about a month, but may be speeded up by summer heat.

The discomfort of flea bites may be temporarily al-

leviated by the application of ice, or by use of a soothing medication recommended by one's family physician. Repeated bites stimulate an allergic response in some individuals so that subsequent bites are more severe than the first. If bites are repeatedly scratched, secondary infection requiring medical treatment may occur.

WHETHER individuals are allergic to flea bites or not, the best solution to the problem is control of the insect. The war on fleas should have three simultaneous attack points: 1) the infested pet; 2) the interior of the home; 3) the yard.

A veterinarian or pet store can recommend proper mate-

rials and safe procedures for ridding the pet of fleas. In the home, thorough use of a vacuum cleaner will pick up fleas in all stages of development. Immediately after use for flea control the vacuum cleaner must be emptied into a bag or other container which can be sealed against escape of the insects until disposal. Insecticides labeled for flea control may be used in homes to spray areas difficult to reach with a vacuum cleaner.

LIKEWISE yards and lawns may be sprayed with such insecticides as malathion, lindane or other product containing the word "fleas" on the label of the container. In all instances of using in-

secticides, all directions and precautions should be carefully followed exactly as stated by the manufacturer. Care should be taken to store such materials out of the reach of children.

For severe infestations, it may be advisable to contact a professional pest control operator, whose names may be found in the yellow pages of the phone book.

It is important that the pet, house and yard be treated on the same day and that this treatment be repeated approximately one week later.

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